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Chinese Who Studied in U.S. Believed Key Man in Development of Missile

By Chalmers M. Roberts
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The man considered most responsible for the development of China's nuclear-tipped missile used to be a devotee of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington's Constitution Hall.

He is Chien Hsueh-shen, the China-born son of a prosperous Shanghai businessman, who will be 57 next month. He was the winner of a scholarship, in pre-Communist years, which brought him to the United States to enhance the scientific brainpower now at the service of Mao Tse-tung.

Chien received a master of science degree in aeronautical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Ph.D., magna cum laude, from the California Institute of Technology. He was a full professor of aeronautics, aged 34, at MIT in 1946 after having taught earlier at Cal Tech where he caught the attention of Theodore von Karmen, one of America's most brilliant mathematicians.

Von Karmen took Chien along when he went to Germany just before V-E day to learn the secrets of Nazi

science. At Braunschweig, von Karmen's group discovered the German work on the A-10, a trans-oceanic successor to the buzz bomb which had wracked London from the Continent.

Chien came back to Washington to listen to the symphony and to write a set of volumes called "New Horizons—Science as the Key to Air Supremacy." This document was the basis of the American missile program in succeeding years. Chien at the time was cleared for top secret information.

In 1950 after Mao captured mainland China, Chien decided to return home but was intercepted at San Pedro, Calif., by FBI agents following the seizure in Honolulu of eight trunkloads of books and papers he had tried to ship on ahead.

Chien was considered too hot to let go back to Communist China because of what he knew. To make a living he returned for five chafing years to Cal Tech until American officials judged his secret knowledge to have become dated. Finally in 1955 he went home, declaring he wanted to help build a new nation so that the Chinese "may live with honor, happiness and in peace."

In China he flourished. He joined the Communist Party, campaigned against "reactionaries" and denounced some of his colleagues for ideological impurity, advising them that technical knowledge was pointless unless guided by Mao's political directives.

That was long before the current Peking purge of those who fail to see all virtue in "Mao's thoughts." There has been no sign that Chien or any of his fellow workers in the nuclear and missile fields have been affected by the "great cultural revolution."

Chien became director of China's nuclear research program with special reference to rocketry. Around him he gathered China's best scientific minds. His aides had degrees from such institutions as the Universities of Paris, Berlin, Edinburgh, Cambridge and Manchester to Purdue, the University of California and the Soviet Union's Institute of Nuclear Research at Dubna.

In all, the best estimates are that something like 1300 to 2000 engineers and 500 to 750 scientists have been continuously employed in China's nuclear program.

By all indications, Chien is

the key missile man. His former American colleagues have recalled him as abrasive and intellectually arrogant.

Music was his relaxation. He married a beautiful Chinese girl who had sung in the Berlin opera. The Western music of his past preference has now been banned in China as decadent or worse.

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CHIEN HSUEH-SHEN
... National Symphony fan